



## The US Foreign Policy Paradoxes in Resolving the Crises Resulting from The Middle East Terrorist Acts

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### ABSTRACT

The US national security was severely challenged in the incidence of 11<sup>th</sup> of September and its foreign policy helped her get rid of the signification crises. The US directed its attention to the Middle East region naming it as a focal point of asymmetrical terroristic threats and announced that it is ready to eradicate the terrorism roots even by applying a unilateralist policy. In fact, the US is seeking to stabilize its hegemony in the Middle East and spread it from there to the entire world. Thus, Middle East turned to the gravity center of the US foreign policy.

Experts believe that the main reason is that the US national interests are placed atop of the politicians' priority list in fighting terrorism in the Middle East. For the same reason, the US has behaved rather contradictorily and ambiguously in its strategies to fight terrorism.

**Keywords:** the US foreign policy, Terrorism, Middle East, international system

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### INTRODUCTION

For the time being, the most important measure atop of the global system's security agenda which is turned into an international issue is terrorism; this is the issue that with the elapse of every day since the largest and the most horrible international terroristic act (11<sup>th</sup> of September, 2001) seems to have not only undergone no decrease in its complicity and its relevant concerns but also to have worsened the situation and in the recent years to the same extent that terrorism per se has been problematic, unilateral international interventions against it have added to the security issues and problems and directed the foreign policy of other countries. In between, the US, as the most powerful country around the globe, feeling the danger of terrorism, has formed its foreign policy into a new shape and nature and it is now leading the fight against terrorism in an international level. On the other hand, scrutiny on the US pattern of relations with the terrorist groups in the Middle East region provides significant insights regarding the intricate foreign policy of the US and its way of policy-making in the middle-east.

In other words, the US, in its fight against terrorism parallel to international system security, especially in the middle-east has been able to achieve some success through emphasizing and underlining unilateralism in its foreign policy as well as via taking advantage of its soft power sources, preemptive system and proactive measures. However, the US unilateral interventions in fighting terrorism have added to the international problems. On the one hand, the US declared its new strategy in fighting terrorism after the aforesaid incident

that had been designed to preserve the US superiority in the international system and that a substantial part of it had to be actualized through displaying interventions in Persian Gulf region. Persian Gulf region, as opined by a great many of the specialists, is the world's heartland and every country that can gain domination over this region will play a key role in the entire important equations of the international system.

The present article, in a strategic study and based on a problem-solving method, makes use of a research-based study to elaborate the US foreign policy in fight against terrorism and then analyzes the methods of elevating security in the international system especially in the Middle-East area.

### Concept and Aspects of Terrorism as a Phenomenon:

Terrorism, as a phenomenon, is one of the most important security challenges of the today's world. Based on the statistics published by the US Ministry of Foreign Affairs, approximately eight thousand terroristic acts have been perpetrated during the 1968 to 1982 time span. Out of this number of terrorist attacks, 540 cases were connected to hostage taking by 188 terrorist groups as a result of which a total of 3162 individuals have been victimized and some 20 percent have been killed or injured. During the recent years, the rate of terroristic acts fluctuated between 600 and 850 that accounts for about two terroristic operations per day (Hajiyani, 2010).

Some analysts believe that terrorism is rooted in Islamic fundamentalism. Islamic fundamentalism is a mindset that was created in reaction to modernity and the Islam World's laggard in respect to the West's civilization as well as in objection to the Islamic communities' degeneration; the mindset is of the belief that the solution to the economical, social and political challenges of the Islamic communities is in revitalization of the

past traditions and return to the golden era of the incipient Islam; therefore, Islamic fundamentalism is as well a political ideology and it is not solely a religious construct. The most important roots of Islamic fundamentalism are:

- 1) The colonization of the Islamic Countries by the western states;
- 2) Fundamentalism is a reaction to the expansion of modernity and western secular values;
- 3) Fundamentalism is a reaction to the deep feelings of groups of Muslims who have been oppressed by Christian westerners;
- 4) Fundamentalism is a reaction to the Zionism that in its eradication of Islam and Muslims from the sacred lands of Palestine enjoys the support of Christians;
- 5) Finally, fundamentalism is a reaction to the West's dual scale policies in the Middle East and/or generally in the Islam World (Abbaszadeh Fath Abadi, 2009).

A single definition of terrorism has not been offered so far. But, in a definition introduced by "the US's Ministry of Defense in 1990, terrorism has been defined as illegal use or threatening to make illegal use of force or violence against the individuals and/or properties for urging or terrifying the governments or communities that is mostly carried out with such an intentions as achieving political, religious and/or ideological goals" (Firhi, 2006). Although there is a lack of consensus by the experts as to what terrorism exactly mean the main pivots of terrorism are:

- 1) Terrorism is a completely political phenomenon;
- 2) Terrorism is accompanied concomitantly by violence or threatening to use violence;
- 3) Terrorism features an interest-oriented intellectuality; and,
- 4) Terrorism is a meaningful phenomenon carrying a message.

One characteristic of terrorism is that it can be observed during any epoch of the history. Thus, terrorism has been classified to five types: traditional terrorism, modern terrorism, postmodern terrorism governmental terrorism and virtual terrorism. Traditional terrorism was carried out by the possessors of the authority and their close relatives and within the framework of government in the course of which no harm was meant to the people. Modern terrorism emerged following the people's entry to the power arena and their employment in adopting direct and indirect strategies in line with acquiring power and political privileges. Postmodern terrorism followed the expansion of communication and information technologies and the advent of concepts such as globalization that caused terrorism to find transnational dimensions; it is not necessarily the humans that are in danger in such a type of terrorism. Governmental terrorism was proposed with the pivotal role being given to the states' attainment of nuclear power and avoidance of nuclear war meaning that the states, knowing the costs of a nuclear war, avoided it and sought their objectives via the sociopolitical groups (Firhi, 2006). Cyber-terrorism is a novel concept that includes the utilization of internet and computer networks and the facilities they provide for purposes such as destroying the infrastructures of a society such as energy, transportation, governmental activities and so forth (Abbasi, 2004).

The Approaches that are adopted in analyzing the terrorism are as stated below:

- 1) Religious approaches that believes that every violence and, consequently, every terroristic act is rooted in religious dogmatism;
- 2) Psychological approaches that seeks to introduce the terrorists as individuals with personality

problems and with no reasonableness in their behaviors;

- 3) Philosophical approaches that is of the belief that globalization has brought about an expansion in such concepts as justice and disparity hence the emergence of terrorism;
- 4) Logical and intellectual approaches express that terrorism follows certain strategic rationale in such a manner that is firstly purposive and secondly calculative and it tries to get the most out of the least. The first three approaches are ineffective for the existence of conflicting examples thereof, but the logical and intellectual approach can be considered as providing the most robust explanation of the terrorism.

#### **The Roots of Terrorist Groups' Emergence in Persian Gulf Region:**

In a glance at the Middle East's contemporary history, particularly at the Persian Gulf's, it can be understood that the policies exercised in this region are mostly designed by the UK and the US. The UK government's policies, in line with securing its national interests, led to the creation of unreal land demarcations and therefore the formation of artificial states followed by consecutive crises, numerous wars and ethnical and religious segregations in the region. The US presence in the Persian Gulf region, following the UK's recession (1971), increased the problems and tensions in the region. Support of despotic regimes, military presence in the region, transfer of weapons to the Persian Gulf region states and middle-east and diplomatic and economical backups played an important role in the survival of their affiliated authoritarian governments after the Persian Gulf War I.

The US policies in the region during early 1980s were the key factor in setting the ground for the preparatory conditions of extremism expansion. As a specimen, the US used the Sunni extremist groups against the former Soviet Union's army in Afghanistan and as an instrument for restricting the Islamic Republic of Iran's influence. The result of such policies was the appearance of a spectrum of terrorist groups like Al-Qaida, Islamic army of Eden and, generally, modern terrorism. The US support of Taliban in Afghanistan during the war between the former Soviet Union and Afghans provided Al-Qaida with an opportunity to organize, recruit and train in the mid 1990s to get ready for take measures globally. In this regard, Samuel Hontington expresses that "the heritage of war was the existence of versatile warriors, camps of logistic military weapons training, widespread networks of individual and organizational relations in the Islam World and, more importantly, acquisition of some sort of feeling powerful and self-confident after the previous accomplishments and intense tendencies towards victory in future. From these individuals' viewpoints, Jihad had succeeded to make a cloud of power, i.e. the Soviet Union, kneel down so they envisioned themselves capable of confrontation with corrupt regimes or even the US" (Amiri, 1997). Thus, the US policies caused the emergence of a new wave of religious extremism.

Inter alia the emergence grounds of religious extremism in the region, the social-political dissidence, the negative reactions of Middle-East nations to the US military presence and its meddling with in the internal affairs of these countries can be pointed out. In other words, the presence of the forces and the military bases has had a negative psychological effect on the region's people (Brunelli, 2012). Also, the US has always supported the Zionist regime as a balancing weight against the regional powers so as to preserve stability in such a manner that the US partiality in respect to the Zionist regime in clashes with the Palestinians and the Arabs has been an important

accelerating factor in the tendencies towards extremism and struggles for retaking the rights through armed battles and/or even sometimes terroristic acts. Among the other reasons behind the anger and hatred of the extremist Islamists, including Bin Ladan, is the US use of Saudi Arabia as a military base in the Persian Gulf War II. Bin Ladan and the other groups sharing his mindset considered the measure as an unforgivable abuse and insolence to the Islamic territories (Barzegar, 2005). In summary, the roots of terrorist groups' emergence are as below:

- 1) The US and Western countries' way of treating the Middle East region states;
- 2) The existence of despotic regimes and totalitarian governments in the Middle-East region countries and their performances; and,
- 3) The US and Western countries' plots for taking advantage of the status quo of the affairs in the Middle-East region countries and even extremist groups in meeting their interests.

#### **The US Middle-Eastern Policy:**

At the end of the twentieth century, the Americans, declaring their doctrine of modern world order, were looking for insure their security through promoting capitalist system values within the framework of democratization process in the target countries and expansion of free market-based policies. From Henry Kissinger's ideas, "with announcing its intentions for creating a new world order, the US was seeking to promulgate the use of its own domestic values to the entire world" (Kegley and Vitkov, 2009).

Security-oriented strategists in the US are of the belief that the US policy in regard of the world countries should be multidimensional and selective; meaning that the US should prioritize the countries in terms of their importance, position and stance. It has to chase democratic goals in some countries and pursue security matters in others. Therefore, as opined by this group, the Middle-East is where the US has no other way than to witness the lack of democracy. From the perspective of individuals like Francis Fukuyama, concerns regarding the stability and security for the purpose of guaranteeing access to oil necessarily precede the promotion of democracy. Security realism has been formulated based on the premise that the US should be selectively pursuing each of its strategic and ideological interests according to the region's capacities and competencies (Dehshiyar, 2007). Thus, Washington's priority has not always been the establishment of a democratic government and it sometimes gives more weight to the strategic interests over ideological values, though a great majority of the international relations theoreticians believe that even the ideological goals and values cannot be pursued if the national interests are ignored. Therefore, it was these same strategic interests that placed the US alongside the authoritarian Arabic regimes for years in the Middle-East and North Africa. The issue made the US foreign policy faced with some sort of actual duality in the area of international system. The perplexing nature of the power and security equations in such an atmosphere is absolutely notable. In fact, the essential problem of the US can be enumerated in the quality of its interaction and the way it manages and balances and, of course, transfers power in the new regional atmosphere.

The US policy in the Middle-East has been in pursue of four major goals during several decades that are: protecting the Middle-East against the rival powers which was mainly exercised during the cold war era and competition with the former Soviet Union and its objective was preventing the Soviet Union (Russia) from exerting its influence in the Middle-East via signing bilateral and multilateral treaties; direct control and domination over the energy resources of the

region and assuring the continuous and safe flow of it to the West; guaranteeing the Zionist regime's security that has always been one of the essential objectives and priorities of Washington in the region and it has always taken measures in the form of offering various aids in line with this so as to provide for the economical-military superiority of the Zionist regime in the region; and, war against terrorism parallel to which the US has imposed a great deal of pressure on the regional countries so as to make them cooperate with it in actualizing the various aspects of such an objective.

#### **The US Foreign Policy in Respect to Islamic Awakening:**

The revolutionary wave that began in Tunisia during late 2010s was rapidly extended to the entire Arab world and it was made famous as Islamic awakening. Widespread protest by the people in Tunisia was extended to Egypt and from there to Libya, Yemen and Bahrain and made the dictator military governments or the despotic Arab monarchies confronted with the risk of instability and decline. This revolutionary wave was essentially taken as an unexpected threat by the US. The governors who were the US close friends and allies were overturned or weakened in their underlying premises of kingship. The strategic partners of the security order the architecture of which was the US were subdued or floundering on their way towards downfall. This security order that had been dominating the Middle-East after the termination of cold war revolved around several substantial axes:

- 1) Expansion and deepening the strategic partnership with the friend countries in line with assuring security, particularly in the area of energy security through the US continuation of military presence as well as military and warfare sales and cooperation;
- 2) Curbing the power of the antagonist states, especially Iran and its allies such as Syria, Hizbullah and Jihadist Palestinian groups that were known as the "resistance axis";
- 3) Fighting against what was called terrorism by the US and military fundamentalist moves by the nongovernmental groups;
- 4) Advancing the peace talks between Arabs and the Zionist regime in such a manner that, on the one hand, with the resolution of the issue, an independent Palestinian state could be established and Zionist regime, as the most important US ally, could be formally identified and authenticated by the Arab countries and, on the other hand, the power of the US allies block could be strengthened more than before via associating the Zionist regime to the Arabs (Lynch, 2011).

#### **The US Middle-Eastern Policies and Terrorism Problem:**

The US has adopted policies in respect to the Middle East, in general, and in respect to the states constituting the region, specifically; in some cases, these are different from its principle policies normally exercised in the Middle East region and are completely institutionalized in its foreign policy as a whole. But, there are also cases that these policies seem not compliant with the policies US has adopted in fighting terrorism in the Middle East region. In US national security strategy announced in May, 2010, violent extremists with the centrality of Al-Qaida, mainly concentrated in Afghanistan and Pakistan, specifically, as well as other regions in the Middle East were pinpointed as a substantial threat to the US national security and it was held that the country's foreign policy should be based on subduing them. It appears that US policies in respect to the Zionist regime, Islam World, countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan are inherently corroborating terrorism and this exposes the US

policy of combating terrorism to challenge. The following section is an explication of this same policy (Gholami, 2010).

- 1) The US Policy in respect to Zionist Regime: since Trueman's presidency in whose tenure the Zionist regime's independency was authenticated up to the present time, the US has been its most important supporter. The US support of the Zionist regime is not the only source of terroristic operations against the US but it is recounted as one important reason behind such attacks that renders the victory in war against terrorism more difficult. For instance, there is no room for any doubt that Zionists' presence in Jerusalem and Palestine calamities has been the main motive for many of Al-Qaida leaders, including Bin Laden himself, to take terroristic measures. Based on 11<sup>th</sup> of September Commission report in the US, Bin Laden has explicitly asserted his determination for punishing the US for its support of the Zionist regime and he has even made efforts to set the attacks' timing in such a way that it be an emphasis on the same assertion. Unbound and unduly support of Zionist regime by the US facilitates the fanatic groups' job for attracting the public support and recruitment of new forces. Surveys of the public thoughts underline the idea that Arab populations feel subtle hostility in respect to the US support of Zionist regime. The advisor group assisting the US Ministry of Foreign Affairs on such issues as general diplomacy in the Islam World and the west has come to the conclusion that the citizens therein feel really upset about Palestinians' calamities and the role that they reckon the US is playing in this so it can be seen that the US policy of Zionist regime support has per se given rise to terrorism training of the radical forces in the region.
- 2) The US Policy in respect to the Islamic States: the US policies in respect to the Islamic countries can be approached from various aspects that incorporate close interactions, support of the conservative regimes, intervention, making efforts to impose values inconsistent with Islamic values and so forth. In Al-Qaida's opinion, the US intervenes in the Islam world and it has to be prohibited from doing so by any possible means. In Al-Qaida's mind, the US is looking for ways to impose western culture to the Islamic countries, it has caused poverty in Iraq via embargoes, it supports Zionist regime while it is an alien element in the region that has to be destroyed and there is a need for putting an end to the US military presence in sacred lands such as Saudi Arabia. Therefore, although the majority of Arabs and Muslims have rejected Al-Qaida's methods, the hostilities towards the US are expanding amongst the Arabs and in the Islam world. Thus, it can be stated that the continuation of some of the US policies in respect to the Islamic countries is per se a contributing factor to the increase in the influence and expansion of Al-Qaida affiliated forces.
- 3) It is stated in the US national security strategy that if no changes are made in Afghanistan and Pakistan in line with development and democracy these two countries will be turned into safe houses for terrorists and Al-Qaida and even there is the possibility of Taliban's retake of power in Afghanistan. Although Al-Qaida considers such a policy by US as another example of the its intervention in Islam affairs and interprets it as an effort made to impose western values that might be

expanded in future the point that has to be mentioned here is that the social life in Afghanistan and Pakistan features qualities that renders any sort of change very difficult to come by. In Afghanistan and Pakistan the sectional and ethnical senses are very strong and deeply institutionalized in a way that the Pakistan and Afghanistan governments have no ruling over a great many of the regions inside their own countries. There are also conflicting ethnical, religious, normative and even geographical identities in these two countries that make a concentrated management a very difficult task. Even the governments in Pakistan and Afghanistan are not capable of changing the texture of their own countries and they are not at all pursuing the completion of a national government in there. But, the US is now seeking to change the social texture of Pakistan and Afghanistan society so as to fight terrorism and this is going to need a lot of hard work. The internal features of Afghanistan and Pakistan societies pose serious challenges for the US terrorism-fighting policy that has introduced Pakistan and Afghanistan as the center of Islamic fundamentalism.

#### **US Strategy in Fighting Terrorism:**

US strategy in fight against terrorism is comprised of seven general components:

- 1) Having belief in and commitment to the idea that the world is unipolar and that the US is undisputed. No coalition of the other powers can create hegemony without the US. In this regard, Paul Wolfowitz writes: "the US should prevent the creation of a rival for itself in the Europe and Asia".
- 2) Analysis of the global threats and the methods to confront them: small terrorist groups may acquire weapons of mass destruction and cause catastrophes so they have to be destroyed by the government.
- 3) The concept of cold war deterrence has been eliminated. Deterrence, sovereignty and power balance are interlaced with one another and the today's terrorism is an international issue. Fighting them because they only wish to sacrifice their lives is very difficult. So, preventive war doctrine has been suggested as a cure.
- 4) Sovereignty has lost its meaning. Terrorists do not know borders. So, the sovereignty has been changed in its signification.
- 5) General ignorance of the international treaties and regulations; bilateral norms and agreements are disregarded due to the nature of the terroristic attacks and the necessity to fight them.
- 6) The US wants to preserve itself a direct and unbound role in responding to the threats. The US believes that no other power is able to confront the threats and terrorism worldwide. Also, they are of the belief that multilateral interventions do not have sufficient efficiency.
- 7) The US new strategy gives little value to the international stability. The US believes that cold war thoughts should be discarded. Thus, its withdrawal from ABM and similar cases has been in regards of such matters. The US is of the belief that the old realist and liberal thoughts make no sense and are thus useless. The US security is not guaranteed by having realistic thoughts. Balance of power is not accountable enough in a world with asymmetrical

threats and the creation of a liberal order via free market and global trade does not decrease the threats (Zakeriyan, 2002).

#### CONCLUSION

The incident that took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, 2001, disregarding the way it was carried out and the reasons behind it, notified the neoconservative American thinkers, who enjoyed abundant influence in Bush's government, of the risk of terrorism. The threat served them well and they turned it into a great opportunity. Immediately, they realized terrorism as the US foreign policy index and headlamp. In the light of such a change in the US foreign policy, the US government began deployments of army over certain borders that were even unprecedented in the cold war period. They, asserting the objective of pursuing terrorists, trampled the Middle-East region under their feet so as to flaunt their emperorship and hegemonic power before the eyes of the world.

Anyhow, nowadays, the fight against terrorism has replaced the fight with cold war communism and it has been turned to an index in the international discourse of the US and even its enemies; this can for a long time shoulder the US policies justification burden in the strategic Middle East region.

In fact, it is clear that the US objective of fighting terrorism in the region, besides confronting the jihadist groups, is taking intervention against the countries threatening the US interests; therefore, whenever the US interest are found insured in fight against terrorism they have taken intensified measures to fight it and, contrarily, whenever the US found its interest guaranteed in cooperation and strengthening of the terrorist groups they backed it up. On the one hand, they dispatch armies to Iraq and Afghanistan to fight terrorists and, on the other hand, they enter negotiations with Taliban about the political future of Afghanistan or they omit the name of People's Mujahedin of Iran from their list of terrorists and support them.

Persian Gulf regional countries should, firstly cooperate with one another in a coherent and organized manner so as to be able to solve the security problems stemming from terroristic interventions and they also have to prevent terroristic thoughts and extremist mindsets from expanding in the region; then, they have to utilize a regional approach towards confrontation with terrorism so as to prevent the foreigners, including the US, from intervening in their domestic affairs.

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